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Overnight Brief

Sunday, May 12, 2002

0530 EDT

ARAB LEADERS RENOUNCE VIOLENCE, SUPPORT SAUDI PLAN

(SBU) After meeting in Egypt, Presidents Mubarak and Assad and Crown Prince Abdullah issued a communique rejecting all forms of violence and calling on Arab states to support the Saudi peace initiative, report the media. The leaders did not rule out a regional peace conference, but maintained such a conference must focus on a permanent settlement and not seek to marginalize Arafat, notes the Embassy. The Egyptians included President Assad in the summit to encourage him not to obstruct the peace process.

(Watch/Embassy Cairo telcon, bbc.co.uk)

MACEDONIANS AGREE ON MINORITY RIGHTS, ELECTIONS

(SBU) In U.S. and EU-brokered talks, GOM and ethnic Albanian leaders agreed on the final major legislative reforms required by the Framework Agreement. The reforms would grant ethnic minorities the right to use their own languages for certain official purposes, increase their numbers in the civil service, and revise electoral procedures. In the wake of this political agreement, the legislative reforms face likely cabinet and parliamentary approval. The deal is a major step forward in the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

(Watch/Embassy Skopje telcon)

ISRAELIS RALLY FOR PEACE; LIKUD POISED TO OPPOSE PA STATE

- (SBU) Some 60,000 Israelis rallied in central Tel Aviv, demanding withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, report the media. The turnout was greater than expected, perhaps bolstered by concern over the possible IDF incursion into Gaza, comments the Embassy. (Watch/Embassy Tel Aviv telcon, haaretzdaily.com)
- (SBU) The Likud Central Committee is scheduled to vote May 12 on a resolution opposing the creation of a Palestinian state, report the media. If voted upon, the resolution would likely pass, adds the Embassy. PM Sharon's supporters are maneuvering to avoid such a showdown. (Watch/Embassy Tel Aviv telcon, haaretzdaily.com)

VENEZUELANS COMMEMORATE VICTIMS OF APRIL 11 PROTESTS

(U) Approximately 100,000 anti-Chavez Venezuelans marched in Caracas in memory of the 17 victims of the protest that preceded last month's coup attempt, report the media. The marchers called for an objective inquiry into the circumstances leading to the deaths. At a small, pro-government rally, demonstrators expressed support for the on-going, official GOV investigation. The anti-Chavez demonstration remained peaceful and did not approach the National Palace, adds the Embassy. (Watch/Embassy Caracas telcon, CNNenEspanol.com, Reuters)

Drafted: ADMeltzer/DRBenning
Dist: State (all bureaus), CIA, DOD, NSC, USUN

Approved: VLCries

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ADOLPH H EISNER
DATE/CASE ID: 03 AUG 2009 200805367

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